DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 703 HE 026 453

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TITLE	The Normalization of Diversity: Multicultural Curricular Change at Urban University.
INSTITUTION	National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, University Park, PA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Apr 92
CONTRACT	R117G10037
NOTE	40p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 1992). For a related document, see HE 026 452.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Change Strategies; College Administration; Colleges; *Cultural Pluralism; *Curriculum Development; Educational Change; Ethnic Groups; *Higher Education; Minority Groups; Multicultural Education; Undergraduate Study; Universities; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS	Diversity Concept

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effect of organizational culture and power on the meaning and practice of multicultural curricular change. A case study is presented of an urban academic institution that had adopted a university-wide undergraduate diversity requirement in 1991 after considerable debate and negotiation among various constituencies. The politics of multicultural curricular change are explored, as well as the effect of structural characteristics of the bureaucratic university such as hierarchy, differentiation, normative power, standardization, and regulation on curricular policy. The interpretations of the university's diversity requirement given by institutional administrators are further explored, paying close attention to messages about power and the politics of difference encoded in language. Selected aspects of commitment to underrepresented groups which indicate an awareness of cultural diversity and receptiveness to multicultural curricular change are also considered. Includes 19 references. (GLR)

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THE NORMALIZATION OF DIVERSITY:

MULTICULTURAL CURRICULAR CHANGE AT URBAN UNIVERSITY

ED357703

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This paper was prepared for presentation at the annual meetings of AERA, San Francisco, April 1992.

This document was prepared pursuant to a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement/Department of Education (OERI/ED). However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the OERI/ED and no official endorsement of the OERI/ED should be inferred.

HE 026 453

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Project No.: R117G10037
CFDA No.: 84.117G

Institutions throughout the country are engaged in efforts to make the curriculum more "multicultural." A recent issue of Change reports that more than a third of all colleges and universities have adopted a multicultural general education requirement (Levine and Cureton, 1992). The preferred route to "curricular multiculturalism" appears to be curricular "diversity" policies. Such policies make it a requirement for students to enroll in courses that emphasize on "differences," in race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and other similar categories. At the University of Minnesota the "U.S. Cultural Pluralism Requirement" directs undergraduates to complete two courses with a primary focus on African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, or Chicanos (Zita, 1988). At my own university undergraduates are required to register in a set number of courses categorized as "diversity focused" or "diversity enhanced," depending on whether "differences" are a primary or secondary focus of the course.

While the apparent flurry of activity around multiculturalism gives the impression that a "quiet revolution" is taking place in higher education (Levine and Cureton, 1991), there has not been discussion of multicultural curricular change from an organizational perspective. Even though there is a sense that curricular multiculturalism is widespread it has not received attention from organizational analysts concerned with the process and politics of change. Apart from a few studies (e.g., Zita, 1988; Pratt, 1992), not much is known about how

organizational structures and policies facilitate or inhibit multicultural curricular change. Nor has much been written about the effect of organizational culture and power on the meaning and practice of multicultural education.

In this paper I examine multicultural curricular change from an organizational perspective through the case study of Urban University (a pseudonym), an institution that adopted a university-wide undergraduate diversity requirement in 1991 after considerable debate and negotiation among various constituencies. This case study is based on interviews I conducted with administrators, faculty, and students during a three-day visit in the fall of 1991, just as Urban was about to begin the implementation of its newly adopted diversity requirement.

Through the experiences of Urban University I explore the politics of multicultural curricular change. My interest is to locate the process of that change in the contextual reality of a bureaucratic university. In particular, I focus on the effect of structural characteristics of the bureaucratic university such as hierarchy, differentiation, normative power, standardization, and regulation on curricular policy. To do so, I examine the interpretations of the university's diversity requirement given by institutional actors, paying close attention to the messages about power and the politics of difference encoded in language. I also concentrate on selected aspects of the organizational context, such as structural expressions of commitment to underrepresented groups which indicate an awareness of cultural

diversity and receptiveness to multicultural curricular change.

The Diversity Requirement

To set the stage for the case study I offer a brief description of the diversity requirement adopted by Urban's faculty senate in 1991. The rationale for Urban's diversity requirement states that "students currently enrolled at Urban may graduate without ever having to consider that the world is made up of diverse peoples; in this sense, the university has not yet met their academic needs." Accordingly, the diversity requirement directs undergraduate students to complete two "diversity-designated" courses, one concerned with diversity in United States society and the other with nations and cultures in other parts of the world. People at Urban summarized the policy by categorizing the first type as a "domestic" diversity courses and the second type an "international" diversity course.

Urban's requirement provides a generalized and inclusive definition of diversity as a category of differences including, race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, age, culture (broken down into religion, ethnicity, national origin, region, or a combination of these), and disability. Even though the inclusivity of the definition makes the requirement appear amorphous, the "diversity working committee," a loose coalition of faculty which proposed and was responsible for getting the requirement approved did not think so. They viewed the definition as "realistic," claiming that it would "make clear to

students who are nonwhite or working class, gay, disabled, foreign-born or aged that their cultures are recognized as an essential part of the university curriculum."

The policy statement's preamble speaks of diversity and those who represent it enticingly:

> the scholarship on these topics, and the students who fit into these categories, represent a challenge to our intellect and imagination as members of a diverse faculty teaching an even more diverse student body.

The call for a diversity requirement is justified as a means of anticipatory socialization in a rapidly changing world:

> "[Its] most basic aim is to create a situation in which the diversity that is characteristic of the world beyond our boundaries does not come as an intellectual shock to a student who graduates from Urban."

The remainder of this case study consists of five parts. Part I provides a look at patterns of organizational culture and structure and how these affect the legislation of a diversity requirement in a decentralized bureaucracy. Part II describes the genesis of the diversity requirement. Part III considers stances of opposition to the diversity requirement and their origin. Part IV is a discussion of the process of "normalizing" diversity and Part V an interpretation of that process through the aid of organizational theory.

Part I: Patterns of Organizational Culture and Structure

The debate over curricular multiculturalism has focused attention on the major elite institutions, many of which do not have an established tradition of commitment to racial diversity. They are institutions where students of color may represent at most 10% of the population, such as the University of Michigan, Stanford, Smith, and Dartmouth, all of which have recently experienced serious racial tensions, and they are being pressured to change their cultural uniformity.

Urban is a different type of institution. It is a public, comprehensive, and commuting university with a student body that is highly diverse. Because it is still a very young institution--just over 25 years old--the possibility of curricular change would appear to be less of an ordeal than at older and better established institutions where change can be perceived as a threat to tradition.

It was founded as the city campus of the state's public land-grant university in order to educate students from the surrounding neighborhoods, which have noticeable ethnic identities--Italian-American, Irish-American, African-American, Latina, and Asian. The student body of approximately 12,500 was described by one professor as "older, from a lower income class, and unsocialized to an intellectual experience." "Many students", he said, "come to Urban because they want a union card, and they tend to be hostile to anything that appears theoretical." The average age of the student population is 27. Women make up 58% of the population and students of color 19%.

University estimates suggest that about 60% of its graduates have been the first in their families to earn a college degree.

Architecturally Urban looks very much like a housing project for low income families. Three high-rise towers of grey concrete constitute the entire campus and give it an "inner-city" look that is out of keeping with its actual location, a tranquil harbor area about 15 minutes away from the city. The only relief from the grey concrete is provided by glass-encased cat-walks that connect the three towers. In addition to facilitating movement from building to building (particularly for students in wheelchairs), the cat-walks provide fine panoramic views of the harbor.

Unfortunately, the campus also resembles low-income housing in its shoddy construction; the inner concrete plaza has enormous cracks, and many sections of it are roped off to prevent pedestrian access.

Policy and Structural Expressions of Institutional Commitment to Racial Diversity

From an organizational standpoint, the possibility for multicultural curricular change depends on the existence of institutional policies and structures that create a climate receptive to diversity. One would thus expect a greater possibility of multicultural curricular change in institutions that are aware of the function (or importance) of structures and

policies in addressing the problems of racism, sexism, or heterosexism (Chesler and Crowfoot, 1989).

At Urban there are clear indications of institutional concern with, and responsiveness to, diversity. Of its several research institutes one is dedicated to the study of Black culture, another is concerned with issues of relevance to the Latina community, and a third examines the consequences of the Vietnam War as well as the condition of Asian refugees. The catalogue shows that Urban offers a variety of courses on topics that fit the general rubric of "multicultural." There is also a large and highly respected Department of Black Studies as well as programs for Latin American Studies, Asian Studies, and Women's Studies. And for an institution of its size, the number of courses on topics of relevance to lesbian and gay communities is unusually large.

From a policy perspective, the most substantive demonstration of Urban's commitment to multiculturalism is the affirmative action program established under the former chancellor. In fact, when people at Urban are asked what is special about their institution, they invariably point to their former chancellor's commitment to hiring African-Americans. As one professor said,

> He was the first chancellor we had who put affirmative action at the front of his agenda. He developed target of opportunity searches and went through an aggressive

round of recruitment of Black faculty.

The chancellor's efforts paid off; about ten years ago as a result of the strong affirmative action program, Urban emerged as the university with the most diverse faculty in its region,[1] meriting it a feature story in the New York Times.

African-American faculty are less sanguine about Urban's affirmative action record. One professor said that the diversity of the faculty is exaggerated:

> It is a matter of 'surplus disability,' the presence of minority faculty inflates their numbers, people here exaggerate the numbers and the significance of minority groups. We are not bursting at the seams with minority faculty. All in all in the College of Arts and Science faculty there are about 15 tenure-track black faculty (out of a faculty of several hundred).

Despite Urban's historical commitment to African-Americans, among some non-White faculty there was a feeling of being left out of decision-making groups, one might say a sense of being discounted. As one professor put it,

> I have never been the chairperson of my department. It did not occur to me that I had been passed over until one of my colleagues pointed it out. This compounded

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[1] Even though Urban is situated in an area with a high concentration of Latinos/as its affirmative action efforts have not extended to this group. The affirmative action officer is the highest ranking Latino in the university administration.

> my sense of isolation. I am now more aware of the ways in which I am excluded and it bothers me.

At times, inclusion seems a token gesture. As another professor pointed out, "It would be hard to feel excluded because we [faculty of color] are put on committees for representation. But one would have to ask whether that kind of service entails inclusion in decision-making." A third professor explained the paradox of being structurally included yet feeling processually excluded:

> In committees my colleagues are able to talk from the perspective of 'insiders', they have information that I am not aware of. Most of what I learn about the university is through memos and that makes me an outsider.

Black faculty felt that "there is still an absolutely unequal existence for people of color," but that this reality is obscured by the fact that Urban "bloats itself with diversity language, the right language."

From a structural standpoint, Urban's educational commitment to multiculturalism is symbolized by the College of Public and Community Service (CPCS). This institution, which is one of Urban's five autonomous colleges, has a mission that is distinctively nontraditional reflects its location in an old building in the heart of the downtown area, rather than on the main campus at the harbor site.

The faculty of CPCS portray themselves as concerned with and

responsive to societal inequities, pointing to their competency-based curriculum designed to prepare students for careers in public and community service so that they might be a "force in the pursuit of social justice in American society."

CPCS functions as a separate and self-contained institution. Its distinct character is made evident in the statement of its mission which differs from Urban's overall mission:

> CPCS was created with a consciousness that long-term systemic inequities exist in important aspects of American life, in the availability of needed services, in educational opportunity, in job opportunity and professional advancement.

Although no one described it as such, CPCS immediately struck me as Urban's structural locus for the practice of multiculturalism, at least in the sense that it endeavors to provide a community-centered education. For example, one of its objectives is

> to recruit students who are members of communities that have traditionally experienced limited access to higher education...and to enable these individuals to become both service providers and active participants in the development of their communities.

CPCS's location in the downtown area, its goal of social transformation through education, and its student-centered curriculum represent an alternative structural reality that segregates it from the main campus. Segregation enables CPCS to

pursue its distinctive mission without obstruction; however, it also keeps the college from becoming a force of multicultural curricular change at the main campus, which does not seem consonant with the university's concern with diversity. For example, there is no cross-registration between CPCS and the other colleges, so that students at CPCS have almost no contact with students at the main campus. Similarly, students at the main campus are not exposed to the educational philosophy practiced by CPCS faculty, which is based on the precepts of critical and liberatory pedagogy (Giroux, 1992; Freire).

Because CPCS occupies a marginal position--physically, pedagogically, and politically--main campus faculty tend to view CPCS faculty, according to one main campus professor, as "lesser gods." They are not valued for their very real contribution to the university's mission or giving the university's urban mission substantive meaning.

The structurally separate situation of CPCS is not that unusual. Indeed, it is common practice for universities to peripheralize programs which fall outside dominant conceptions of academic organization, pedagogy, and the construction of knowledge. But one cannot help observing that there is a sort of perverse irony in this organizational configuration. As an outsider who had chosen to study Urban for its initiatives in multicultural curricular change, I was immediately struck by CPCS's embodiment of the ideals of the multicultural project: it has the highest concentration of faculty and students of color

and its mission is based on principles of equity and antiracism. Yet Urban, in order to institutionalize "diversity," passed a discrete course requirement rather than turning to the educational philosophy and practice of the "marginalized" CPCS as a support for or reinforcement of multicultural education at the main campus.

Legislating Diversity in the Decentralized Bureaucracy

One of the reasons why the experience of CPCS could no be imported to the main campus is that Urban, like the great majority of institutions in this country, was not structurally designed for an interdisciplinary practice of multiculturalism (Hill, 1991). Although Urban's culture could be characterized as open to multicultural efforts, the decentralized organizational structure creates opposition to centralized curricular efforts. The autonomy of the individual colleges is precious, and is particularly coveted by the two most powerful colleges--Arts and Science and Management which are led by highly influential deans, both of whom are thought to be opposed to the diversity requirement. In contrast, the deans of the College of Education, College of Nursing, and CPCS--the only administrators of color in the upper administrative echelon are viewed as supportive of the diversity requirement and less concerned about the loss of autonomy. However, these deans derive considerably less power from Urban's decentralized structure and therefore may feel less threatened by attempts to centralize the curriculum.

Four of the colleges--Arts and Science, Management, Education, and Nursing-- are housed in the three interconnected high-rise towers that constitute Urban's main campus. But despite their physical closeness they behave more like the self-contained colleges typical of a large and complex university; they are in effect separate and distinct. (The fifth college is the anomalous CPCS, physically removed from the main campus.)

The five colleges are very loosely coupled. In fact, until the adoption of the diversity requirement, there were no core undergraduate requirements. Initially, the strongest opposition to the proposal for the diversity requirement was that it violated one of the more sacred organizational norms--decentralization and autonomy at the college level.

The Dean of the College of Arts and Science, a powerful and highly influential administrator was quick to point out the inconsistency between the diversity requirement and Urban's organizational culture:

> I was never persuaded that it made sense to establish this [diversity requirement] at the campus level when, within our organizational culture, the whole curriculum has been administered, planned, and conceived at the level of the individual colleges. I realize that there are other ways to organize universities, but this campus has always been decentralized in terms of educational requirements. In our college we have a core curriculum and some of the other colleges (e.g.,

Management) have adopted our requirements, but they are not under any compulsion to do so.

From the dean's vantage point a preferable course of action would have been to work through the individual colleges. As he put it, "I tried to tell the Diversity Committee (this was the loose faculty coalition that proposed the requirement) that if they went this new route it was inevitable that it would make people uncomfortable given that we don't have other core requirements in reading, in writing, or in science."

When the diversity committee first proposed the requirement, Urban's relativistic structural organization (Hill, 1991) provided the basis for a neutral and depersonalized argument against it. The objection, it was maintained, was not that diversity, as a principle, was undesirable, but rather that, from a structural standpoint, such a requirement seemed an ill-conceived strategy for the achievement of multicultural curricular change.

Despite the obvious appeal of the "structuralist" objection, the diversity requirement was unanimously approved by the faculty senate. Its approval was not an easy accomplishment, nor was the end result completely satisfying to the proponents of the requirement or to those who consider themselves advocates of multiculturalism.

Part II: The Genesis of the Diversity Requirement

The prospects for the diversity requirement were uncertain from the start. It came into being in an unexpected and unplanned way--"from the bottom up," as its proponents proudly point out. It was the "brainchild" of a small group of faculty who came to know each other during a semester-long curricular integration seminar organized by Urban's Center for the Improvement of Teaching. The members of this seminar explored approaches to the integration of material on gender, race, class, sexual orientation and physical disability into the curriculum. As the seminar participants discovered the burgeoning literature by women and African-American scholars and were exposed to other, suppressed realities such as that of the student in a wheelchair in an academic milieu organized for the physically able or that of the lesbian student in an institution that universalizes heterosexuality as sexuality, they began to talk about a more systematic way of integrating "differences" into the curriculum.

This group, which eventually was formalized into the "diversity requirement working group," consisted of faculty at the periphery of the institution. Their status was that of outsiders. Before becoming advocates of diversity as a basis for curricular change, they were mostly anonymous. None of the members of the group possessed any of the traditional forms of political power and influence. Quite the contrary, the very composition of the coalition reflected the diversity they were struggling to have represented in the curriculum by means of the requirement. The more visible members of the coalition were

African-Americans (one of them the dean of CPCS), lesbian and gay faculty, Anglo women, a Chinese-American professor who identified strongly with his experience as a grassroots community organizer, and a Latina who was a member of the professional staff.

Given their limited power and status, the diversity coalition worked to build support for the requirement among faculty and students. As one member of the group proudly recounted,

> We started with the faculty. It was built up outside all the governance structures of the university. None of us were on the faculty council. We tried to mobilize students and faculty support and we built a constituency that was outside the governance bodies. Students got 600 signatures in support of it. It was not until we felt that we had built a constituency for change that we presented it to the faculty council.

The de facto leader of the diversity coalition was an unknown woman rather than a highly visible campus leader. Although she had neither power nor influence, she was highly committed to the idea that students must confront other cultures and became an outspoken proponent of the diversity requirement. A fellow committee member described her as follows:

> This is... a white middle-aged woman who is a Russian historian and comes from a progressive background. She is a quiet type who had not been that active in the university or

was considered a powerful figure in governance yet she was very important, she was critical to this effort. She is clearly the main innovator. It is she who pushed the idea and got it moving. She has been the leader of the whole effort.

In addition to the professor of Russian history, there were two other Anglo women who emerged at the forefront of the movement, one of whom identified herself as a lesbian. The fact that all three leaders were Anglo was viewed positively by faculty of color because "it might dispel the discomfort that many of the white faculty felt about diversity and... its implications...educationally as well as socially and politically." African-American faculty perceived alarm among their White colleagues at the sudden talk of differences and the increasing self-awareness of previously silent groups. The general feeling among faculty of color and others in the diversity working group was that their colleagues would react viscerally to anything that might be perceived as a threat to their positions. As one professor put it, "In being spearheaded by White women, it [the coalition] made diversity more acceptable, had it been otherwise it might have provoked more resistance." And, he added,

> I do not find anything amiss that this movement was spearheaded by white women. They have been almost embarrassed about their leadership. They have not been

proprietary.

Ironically, the Anglo women leaders had a different view of the situation. They attributed their success at recruiting supporters for the requirement to the presence of faculty of color at meetings of the coalition. Their Anglo colleagues, they felt, were less likely to express hostility openly "for fear of being perceived as racist."

Part III: Oppositional Stances

After several months of discussion and negotiated compromises the diversity requirement was adopted unanimously by the Faculty Council. The fact that it received a unanimous vote was emphasized as a concrete expression of the university's support for the goals of diversity. But its unanimous passage should not be equated with a collective institutional embrace.

Those who opposed the diversity requirement rarely spoke in ways that would identify them as "antimulticulturalist." They never questioned the principle of diversity itself, making it appear that their oppositional stance was based on other, more neutral considerations.

However, it came as a surprise when a variety of arguments were made against adoption of the requirement during the faculty senate's deliberation. Some faculty said it was redundant because diversity was already inherent in their courses; e.g., "We are already dealing with indigenous cultures in Latin

America" or "We deal with diversity in our courses in international business relations." The usual accusations were hurled against the diversity requirement. Some questioned the intellectual merit of diversity; others argued that diversity courses amounted to no more than character improvement and sensitivity training. And still others raised the perennial question, "What is the methodology of diversity courses?", implying that the concept of diversity lacks an epistemology and is therefore incapable of producing justifiable claims about the nature of knowledge and reality.

Arguments of this kind were plentiful, but they are so common and by now so well documented in the "cultural wars" (Shor,) raging in the nation's campuses (Rosaldo, 1989) that I want to focus instead on stances of opposition that were shaped by the political and cultural particularities of Urban. I will discuss three such stances, which reflect the politics and complexity of multicultural curricular change. I chose these three because they illustrate the multiplicity of perceptions that affect the process of curricular change.

Faculty animosity toward the chancellor

One of the major stances against the diversity requirement was sparked by distrust of the chancellor and her motives for supporting it. As one proponent of the requirement explained, "It was clear early on after the chancellor took office that she was going to be supportive and that made a lot of difference to

us emotionally." Even though the diversity working group welcomed the chancellor's support, they were, as one member put it, "kind of jealous to keep this effort from being co-opted by the administration." The diversity working group sensed that if their initiative was seen as having emanated from the chancellor's office, faculty would be quick to mobilize against it.

The most outspoken opponents to the requirement--faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences--were also highly critical of the chancellor. On at least two occasions she had attempted to break CAS into smaller units. In the atmosphere of distrust which resulted, any action out-of-the ordinary--like the campaign for the diversity requirement--was immediately suspected as an attempt by the chancellor to break up the college and erode its power base. As a member of the diversity working group said,

> We found some of the resistance was coming from people who thought this was something the administration was shoving down our throats, which really does not characterize the development of this at all. It really does not. Many people here are used to thinking of change as something that is imposed from the administration.

Despite the efforts of the diversity working group not to be seen as a tool of the administration and to show that members of the faculty were responsible for this initiative, other CAS faculty members were not easily persuaded. They found it hard to

believe that the proposal would have gained momentum had the chancellor not been behind it. Furthermore, it was inconceivable to them that a group of faculty members with "low visibility" could have masterminded the diversity requirement. One CAS faculty member claimed that the origin of the diversity requirement was not the "bottom-up" version given by the diversity working group, but that

> the administration organized the committee on diversity...The administration often initiates similar kinds of ideas. Certainly there was top-down pressure for a diversity requirement. The chancellor spoke about such a requirement since she came here.

Ulterior motives were also ascribed to the chancellor's support. One professor remarked that, "diversity represents a good advertising ploy to bring in minority students and it does not cost anything." Others thought that the diversity requirement provided her with an agenda that made her appear to be at the cutting-edge of curricular change--a chancellor with a vision.

A "Tayloristic" response to diversity

A different form of opposition to the diversity requirement was articulated by a faculty member who considered the diversity requirement a false approach to multiculturalism. Although she viewed the requirement as well-intended, she felt very strongly that it was a misguided attempt that would result in the

routinization of diversity. She said, "I am by no means against it but I have great fears of trivialization, or misrepresentation and have questions about how diversity can be introduced in the classroom in a substantive, responsible way." She furthered explained,

> For me it is not to introduce multiculturalism in classes but to find structural ways for underrepresented groups to speak for themselves within the context of the curriculum. So I have difficulty in understanding what diversity as a 'thing' might be except an abstraction. I am uncomfortable speaking for other groups. We need to confront the fact that there is a major difference between representing others and allowing them to present themselves.

She was particularly repelled by the scientific management approach--the "Taylorization" of diversity--which was most obvious in the prescriptiveness of the policy statement. To meet either the "domestic" or "international" component of the requirement, courses had to address at least two of the eleven primary and secondary differences listed in the requirement's definition of diversity. The way in which courses could meet this criterion reflected an unusually mechanistic approach to the application of the requirement:

> a) primary focus could be placed on one of the differences, with a secondary emphasis on the other;
> b) equal emphasis could be placed on two or more

differences; or

c) a course could emphasize as many of the differences as the faculty member felt qualified to teach.

The nature of knowledge and the impetus for curricular change: Social vs. academic criteria of goodness

The strongest and most thoroughly articulated statement in opposition to the diversity requirement emerged after the requirement's adoption, just as it was about to go into effect. It came in the form of a lengthy memorandum from the dean of the College of Arts and Science to his faculty, which was revealing for a variety of reasons. The memo--which was impressively written--made clear that his original objections to the requirement--the structural incompatibility of the requirement with Urban's decentralized organization--were minor compared to the apprehensions he now communicated to his faculty (and the entire university as well, for his memo was being widely circulated and discussed during my visit).

In the memo the dean makes several observations about the diversity requirement which appear to have been inspired by the antimulticultural arguments of "educational fundamentalists" (Graff, 1992) like William Bennett, Harold Bloom, and Lynn Cheyney. I will briefly discuss three of the most salient arguments which demonstrate the vehemence of the attack against the requirement.

First, the dean delegitimates the requirement by describing

it, in hierarchic fashion, as curricular decision-making on the basis of social rather than academic criteria,

> It seems to me, indeed, that the decision to institute a diversity requirement moves the discussion of our curriculum to a plane that requires broad and systematic reflection on the entire basis of our general education program. I am referring particularly to the fact that the fundamental argument in favor of a diversity requirement rests on considerations of a social rather than an academic nature (my emphasis).

The dean's statement is based on assumptions about the nature of knowledge that are at the center of the debate between "Eurocentrists" and "Multiculturalists." The contrast of a curriculum based on social concerns to one based on academic concerns is one of the more ordinary ways by which "educational fundamentalists" denigrate "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault,; Hill Collins, 1991).

To bolster the inferior-superior message encoded in the hierarchical dichotomization of social/subjectivist vs. academic/objectivist knowledge, the dean implies that a curriculum based on "diversity" criteria promotes social awareness, whereas a curriculum based on traditional academic criteria is concerned with the entire body of accepted knowledge:

> ...those who have advocated the establishment of a requirement so persuasively do so on the ground that life in contemporary society requires certain kinds of awareness (my emphasis). This is very different from arguing that students need to be exposed to the full range of knowledge and modes of inquiry as currently defined by the various academic disciplines (my emphasis). Yet this latter approach to structuring distribution requirements has provided the primary basis for designing general education programs, including our own, for decades, since academics have had so much difficulty agreeing on a system of social or cultural values that they wish collectively to affirm.

Second, the dean's memo sounds the alarm that a curriculum based on social concerns will disrupt the stability that prevailed when the curriculum was based on the value-neutral knowledge comprising the academic disciplines. What the dean overlooks is the fact that stability was secured by the suppression of narratives of difference (Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1984, 1989) in an academy that was markedly homogeneous. As long as "negative others" (e.g., women, African-Americans, Latinas) remained small in number, their different and oppositional narratives could be left out, on grounds that knowledge claims arising from their experience was too particularistic to justify

inclusion in a traditional academic curriculum. Such a curriculum, however, tends to equate knowledge with the experience of the White Western Male (Harding, 1991).

Third, the dean states that if Urban is to move towards a curriculum dictated by social concerns, consideration must be given not only to diversity but also to "other themes of contemporary life...of great significance [that] appropriately command our attention once we define the basis of our general education program in social terms [my emphasis]."

Part IV: The Normalization of Diversity

The diversity working committee anticipated opposition and attempted to diffuse it by wording the requirement as liberally as possible. One member of the committee observed, "There were a lot of constituencies who would buy into it [the requirement] if it was broadly representative." Another added, "No one can say we are keeping Whites out." In fact, the women who led the diversity working committee purposely defined diversity very broadly to avoid defensive reactions from white males who might see themselves cast in the role of oppressor.

The objective of the working committee was to secure the requirement's adoption, and they concentrated on deflecting opposition, mostly by adding more "differences" to the definition of diversity. Unfortunately, the outcome was that the various types of difference included in the list were converted into

technical, exchangeable, and depoliticized categories. In effect diversity was "normalized" to protect students who might experience discomfort if they were exposed to certain realities of the "negative others." The "normalization" of diversity made the requirement more acceptable. As one professor put it,

> I thought the way the proposal defined diversity was particularly fine in the sense that it did not limit it to the political issues of diversity (my emphasis) and recognized diversity of religious beliefs. We would not want this requirement to be roping students into situations where they felt they were being preached to politically. We wanted a genuine sense of diversity (my emphasis), and for a particular group of students it is better to talk about cultural diversity or religious beliefs than racial or gender diversity. This way students will not be forced into specific confrontations (my emphasis).

Also, as this professor observes approvingly, the normalization of diversity makes it possible for students to avoid knowledge of certain types of "difference" that might be offensive to their beliefs:

> Students who have strong religious backgrounds might find a course in sexual orientation extremely problematic because their beliefs are strongly fundamentalist and this would cause a real crisis.

Under this rationale fundamentalist students need not be exposed to the realities of the "invisible existences" imposed on human beings they judge as immoral and sexually deviant. The "nonconfrontational" approach to diversity thus permits the view that some differences should not be discussed. But one might then ask, if a rational justification can be offered for the need to protect fundamentalist students from knowledge about lesbian and gay existences, should anti-Semitic students be protected from knowledge about the human ravages of the Holocaust, or racist students from knowledge of slavery?

Undoubtedly the normalization of diversity made adoption of the requirement possible. But this form of legislated diversity raises serious questions. For one thing, it would not appear to be conducive to the multicultural imperative for "transformative dialogues of respect" (Hill, 1991) with other cultures. Urban's legislated diversity requirement can give way to "congenial" (Hill, 1991) or "harmonious" (Giroux, 1992) diversity since it is devised to avert difficult encounters between the Self and Others.

Indeed, the Dean of the College of Arts and Science observed,

> the way the requirement is structured, it will allow students to take courses in substantive areas where they are most comfortable instead of in courses that stretch their minds and sensibilities, because all

> courses across the curriculum will meet this requirement. Medieval history will meet it, as will courses in women's studies. A course in the history of religion that deals with the question of social class and gender would meet the diversity requirement.

The transformative possibilities that proponents saw in the diversity requirement were circumscribed by the normalization of diversity. A professor of color said he had supported the requirement because

> I want there to be an understanding of the position, place in society, and contribution of African-Americans and other minority groups. What I want the diversity requirement to do is to spell out the extent to which these groups have been denied their inclusion; what the processes of exclusion have been; a detailed explanation of how they have been shut out of political processes and shut out of society; how their role and participation in history has been denied--and that this has not been an accident but that it has been deliberate.

The critique aspect of content in a multicultural curriculum which this professor emphasized was not promoted by the diversity requirement or shared by all its supporters. Passage of the requirement was made possible through compromises to win the support of those for whom "diversity" is a hydra-like threat--an

abandonment of curricular coherence, the end of progress (a return to the primitive?), the ascendancy of a lesser form of "social" and "particularistic" awareness, the rejection of a higher form of "academic" and "universal" knowledge.

In the light of such compromises, one might ask why the diversity committee persisted in pushing for adoption of the requirement. What would it accomplish in its diluted form? In this case study I have attempted to describe the complexity of multicultural change; there are no simple answers to these questions. At this juncture the reader might think that such a watered-down requirement is not desirable--that it will accomplish very little. However, to dismiss the requirement as a well-meaning effort that went awry, as I was tempted to do earlier, now seems too obvious an answer.

For me, the inclusiveness of the diversity requirement was a misrepresentation of the project of multicultural education. In a conversation I had with one of the members of the diversity working committee about the nature of the requirement, he acknowledged that "it looks as if we are treating everything under the sun," and that it was true that courses need not consider diversity from the standpoint of "racism, inequality, and social injustice." Nonetheless, he still felt that the requirement was of great value:

> To the extent that requirements in the curriculum are expressions of what is important in a university's

education and reflects a vision of what it means to be educated the diversity requirement is really important.

At Urban, where no other cross-college requirements presently exist, the diversity requirement carries a symbolic message. The label "requirement" in a hierarchic system that "oozes with messages about centrality and marginality" (Hill, 1991, p. 44) invests the content of diversity courses with the coveted status of essential knowledge. For its advocates, many of whom belong to minorities "vying for the right to reality--to be accepted as legitimate expressions of the true and the good" (Gergen, 1991, p. 7), the diversity requirement, despite all of its "functionalist" flaws, provides a badly needed opening to the redefinition of knowledge in terms of differences. The significance of this cannot be ignored; the very reason that made the advocates so resolute in their fight for the requirement's passage is what made it so threatening to those in power. The dean of the College of Arts and Science clearly implied that it might not be wise for a university to have a policy that singles out "diversity" as the only essential knowledge to warrant elevation to the status of campus-wide requirement.

A diversity requirement like that adopted at Urban can also be viewed as constituting as a stepping stone to further dialogue and a heightened awareness among the faculty. Certainly, now that Urban has a diversity requirement, there is a need for

courses that meet the requirement and for faculty development activities that might not have come about otherwise. In fact, shortly after adopting the requirement the diversity working committee received a generous grant from a private foundation that will enable concerned faculty to develop new courses and revise course content to address the differences of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. What made Urban attractive to the foundation was the fact that it had a diversity requirement, which was taken as a sign of commitment and, also that, because the requirement was developed and promoted by the faculty rather than by administrators, it provided a model of faculty as agents of change.

Part V: Conclusion

This paper was intended to illustrate the complexities of multicultural curricular change in bureaucratic academic organizations. I have relied almost exclusively on the details of the case study and have used references sparingly, so that the reader may reach his or her own conclusions on the basis of the a narrative unobstructed by the jargon of organization theory. In closing, I want to suggest how this case study might inform our understanding of multicultural curricular change in academic institutions.

The diversity requirement was very much a product of the

modernist view of organizations[2] (Cooper and Burrell, 1988) in that it was conceived as a solution to the problem of pluralism. According to the policy statement it was a means of ensuring that students did not suffer "cultural shock" when they stepped into the outside world. That the diversity requirement was considered a solution is evident in the preamble to the policy statement. The "realities of diversity" are construed only in demographic terms, the case for the requirement resting almost exclusively on the changing racial and ethnic profile of the nation, Urban's location, and its student body. The chancellor's recent speeches reflect an administratively-fueled concern for diversity. In a talk to fellow presidents she said, "How we manage diversity without being torn apart will define how well we as presidents or chancellors perform in the next ten years." Although she supported the principle of diversity, she felt compelled to warn her colleagues of its potential dangers:

> As we move to a multicultural setting, it is important that we as leaders on our campuses do not move too far away from the vitality that our common national culture contains."[3]

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[2]By modern understandings I am referring to management theories of social organization that are concerned with the techniques of rationality, regulation, stability, unity, and effectiveness. The organizational models I have in mind are those that emphasize standardization (e.g., the bureaucracy); consensus and shared reality (e.g., the collegium); and cognitive rationality (e.g., the cybernetic system).

[3]The dean of arts and science, like the chancellor, also raised the issue of diversity in contrast to the need for a common national culture. Although I have chosen not to discuss

Modern understandings of organization lead to reductionist thinking about multiculturalism, so that differences become a matter of shifting demographics and diversity a "thing" in need of management. Such theories encourage a cybernetic view of multicultural curricular change, in which a diversity requirement becomes an adjustment that maintains the overall system functioning and under control. The "realities of diversity" are not construed in potent terms such as the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (West, 1991) or the "teaching of conflicts" (Graff, 1992), or as a "politics of difference" (Giroux, 1992); instead, differences are marginalized by virtue of being defined in reference to the "national common culture." If the requirement were constructed from the standpoint of the "self-identity" of differences, it would be impossible to teach about race without confronting racism, or gender without confronting sexism, or sexual orientation without confronting heterosexism (Pratt, 1992).

Rather than viewing the diversity requirement as a solution I chose to problemize (Cooper and Burrell, 1988) it in order to reveal that the appearance of consensus on diversity is often misleading, as it proved to be at Urban. In so doing I showed

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the implications embedded in the image of a "common culture" I want to call attention to Young's (1990) construction of the ideal of commonality as a totalizing force that gives rise to racism, ethnic chauvinism, class devaluation, homophobia, sexism, etc. As administrators, faculty, students, researchers, and policy makers we need to critically engage how language (e.g., the taken-for-granted term of "common culture) can betray the very things to which we espouse support.

that at Urban there are disparities in perspective (e.g., the opposing views of Anglo and African-American faculty about affirmative action), there is a tendency to marginalize difference (e.g., the isolated location of the College of Public Community Service); and there is dissensus about diversity (e.g., the alternative views of the chancellor, the dean of the College of Arts and Science, the members of the diversity working group, and the "leftist" dissenting professor).

What this suggests is that, as colleges and universities consider multicultural curricular change, it is imperative to first engage in a dialogue about the meanings ascribed to "diversity" and to "multiculturalism," as well as its educational purposes. As more institutions consider multicultural education, questions must be raised about the nature of the multicultural project, questions such as: Is the purpose of multiculturalism to create harmonious encounters with Otherness? Is it to bring the marginalized Others to the center? Is it to promote a critical discourse on the construction of the marginalized Others? Is it to create a pedagogy of empowerment? Or to advance the ideal of an unoppressive society and the affirmation of a politics of difference? In the absence of such a dialogue it becomes all the more onerous for an institution to develop an administrative and pedagogical policy of "multiculturalism" that is truly transformative.

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